

Wheels: A reader writes, “I have a 2005 Lexus RX 330 and while driving, the “VCS” (vehicle stability control system), the “BRAKE” and “ABS” (antilock braking system) lights come on simultaneously. Then, after driving for an hour, the lights disappear if I turn off the engine and restart the car. This happens every time I drive the car. I had a parts store check for trouble codes and they did not find any stored codes. A friend said it could be a bad oxygen sensor. What could cause this problem?”

Halderman: If the brake fluid level is just slightly low, it can cause these warning lights to come on. When cold, the brake fluid shrinks and the levels drop. Then, when it warms a little, the level will be okay and not show a fault. Add some DOT 3 brake fluid from a new container and the warning lights should stay off. Do not add above the "MAX" level to allow room for expansion.

The "Check Engine" light (symbol of an engine) would come on if the computer sensed a problem with the oxygen sensor or other engine-related faults and there would also be a diagnostic trouble code (DTC) stored, so the parts store would have found that during their inspection. They may not have noticed if the brake fluid is slightly down. It has been my experience that the warning light will come on long before the brake fluid level reaches the low mark. As brake pads wear normally, the caliper piston has to move out of the bore to compensate. This means that the brake fluid level will drop.

